

first fire began shortly after 12:30, and spread quickly. Wind gusting to nearly 20 mph blew burning debris onto other buildings.

The fires resulted in the destruction of numerous buildings and property, and spread through city blocks and a section of the Virginia Commonwealth University campus. A total of 29 buildings suffered damage, with 19 being condemned by either water or structural damage. Yet, the destruction and damage could certainly have been worse. It was only through the combined efforts of the firefighters who responded to the scene that the fire was contained as quickly as it was. Local firefighters who initially answered the call were later assisted by firefighters from fire stations throughout the region. There were about 200 firefighters on the scene, along with 50 pieces of equipment. Together, they worked to defeat the blaze—and fought the challenging wind, smoke and heat conditions in order to save the remaining area. We thank them today for their heroic efforts to contain the damage and to protect human lives.

It is appropriate for us to also recognize the efforts of the police on March 26th. As always, they were instrumental in keeping our citizens safe. For example, they evacuated several buildings and about 50 nearby homes, going door to door.

And last, today, we recognize the countless private citizens, volunteers and organizations that—along with the firefighters, police, and public servants—worked as a seamless team preserving and protecting human lives, defending property, and providing food and comfort to all affected.

All of these individuals deserve our recognition, and our gratitude. They met their community's call to duty by providing brave and steadfast assistance and upholding the finest traditions of the Commonwealth of Virginia. We, and all Americans, thank you for your supreme efforts.

FALLEN HEROES

SPEECH OF

HON. TOM DELAY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 20, 2004

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, James Vincent DePierri was a soldier of the greatest generation and one of my constituents. He passed away on August 7, 2000. The following eulogy was written by his son-in-law, Dalton Smith, and delivered at the funeral by his son, Jim DePierri.

JAMES VINCENT DEPIERRI—SOLDIER,
SURVIVOR

He was only 21 years old that cloudy overcast day. It was the 6th of June, 1944. He had been anxiously waiting just offshore for hours that seemed like days. Men beside him were saying prayers and writing their last letters to their loved ones, for they knew what lay before them that fateful day, D-Day—the Allied Invasion of Normandy. Thousands of American soldiers died that day on the beaches of Normandy, the worst casualties having been inflicted on Omaha Beach. As luck would have it, that is where a young soldier named James Vincent DePierri would be going ashore.

Young Jim DePierri would be lucky that day. He survived one of the worst battles and

the greatest infliction of casualties the United States Armed Forces has ever endured. Jim DePierri was a survivor.

It no doubt comes as news to even his closest friends that Jim was even in World War II, much less that he was one of those brave souls who stormed Omaha Beach on D-Day. Jim was not the kind to brag of his exploits or for that matter even mention his experience. It would probably also be news that Jim DePierri participated in 4 other of the major battles of World War II, including the Battle of the Bulge. Jim DePierri was a survivor.

It may be that having seen so many of his fellow soldiers die all around him that Jim considered every day he had on earth thereafter to be a blessing. His service to the church may have been his way of trying to silently repay what I am sure he believed to be a gift from God, the gift of life.

The real benefactors of that gift are here today embodied in his children, Carol, Patty, Jim and Sharon along with the love of his life, his wife, Rose, and their grandchildren.

His first grandson, my son Jordan Vincent Smith, asked me one day if Papa Jim had been in the war. When we inquired, we were astonished to learn of how much Jim, who never spoke of the war, was involved in World War II. That was many years ago, but I had read of soldiers who had never received their medals, so I gave the information to Jim and he wrote off to the Army. What came back was a box full of medals, that would have filled the chest of any soldier's uniform, including a medal for 114 days of duty on the front lines. But you would have never known from Jim that he had even been in the Army.

It has been said that his was the greatest generation. With quiet heroes like Jim DePierri, a man of character, determination and forthrightness, there is no doubt in my mind that his was the greatest generation.

Those of my generation can only read about or see the film of those great battles. To have been there was clearly a privilege. They considered it their duty. A duty owed to one's country that those of us who were not there can only imagine. That is not to say that we should forget or let pass into distant memory, the heroes of this country. Soon they will all be gone, but to those of you who knew Jim DePierri, who know a silent hero like Jim, or who may have been one of those fortunate souls to have been afforded the honor of fighting for their country and the freedom that we now enjoy, please do not let another day go by without thanking them and their generation of heroes or knowing how much you are appreciated.

Luckily, we had the opportunity to thank Jim. On the 50th anniversary of D-Day, we took Jim and Rose out to dinner, without saying why (I am not sure I even told his daughter, Patty, my wife). The Italian restaurant was full that evening, but I took it upon myself to stand up, get the attention of the whole restaurant and propose a toast to Jim DePierri and all of the soldiers who risked their lives for us on that 6th day of June 1944. Jim was embarrassed, but glad someone cared.

In subsequent years, I would send Jim clippings of editorials on Veterans Day and subsequent anniversaries of D-Day. He would not say anything to anyone else, except maybe Rose, but he always appreciated someone remembering.

Today we are here to remember Jim DePierri, a soldier, a survivor, that most never heard of, but without whom we may not be here today enjoying the freedom he helped to preserve.

Thank you Jim DePierri and I will assure you that your grandchildren and all future generations will remember their grandfather

and great grandfather and his service to his country.

Jim DePierri, a hero, of the greatest generation.

NORTHWEST INDIANA FEDERATION OF LABOR AFL-CIO

HON. PETER J. VISCLOSKY

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 8, 2004

Mr. VISCLOSKY. Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct honor to congratulate some of the most dedicated and skilled workers in Northwest Indiana. The Northwest Indiana Federation of Labor AFL-CIO will recognize these individuals for their dedication during a banquet to be held at the Avalon Manor Banquet Hall in Hobart, Indiana, on Thursday, June 10, 2004. These individuals, in addition to the other Northwest Indiana Federation of Labor members who have served Northwest Indiana so diligently for such a long period of time, are a testament to the exemplary American worker: loyal, dedicated, and hardworking.

Mr. Johnathan Comer will receive the Old Warrior Award. Mr. Comer was the first African American to be elected to a major basic steel local—Youngstown Sheet & Tube, USWA 1011. He has spent many years dedicating his life to the interests of the labor community as well as his community in Northwest Indiana. The years of hard work he has put forth are a true inspiration to all.

Mr. Robert Cashman will receive the George Meany Award. Mr. Cashman has contributed graciously to the youth of our community. His dedication and devotion to the youth of our nation is a goal we should all strive to achieve.

Ms. Robin Rich is being honored with the Service to Labor Award. She has been a devoted organizer for the United States Steelworkers of America in District 7. Ms. Rich is a bold, strong, and loyal person, and is willing to fight for what she believes in. She has organized various events and programs for USWA District 7. Ms. Rich has given her time and effort selflessly to the people of Northwest Indiana and Illinois throughout her career.

Mr. Bob Anadell is being honored with the Community Service Award. Bob has spent nearly 40 years dedicating his life to the interests of Local 697 as well as his community in Northwest Indiana. His career at Loom 697 has allowed him the opportunity to touch the lives of numerous people.

Portage Mayor Doug Olson and City Council Members Elizabeth Modesto, David Fagen, David Highlands, Ed Gottschling, Richard Turnak, Mark Oprisko, and Olga Velazquez, are being honored with the Union Label Award. The exceptional service they have provided to the community deserves our admiration and respect. The dedication and commitment these elected officials have demonstrated for their community is exemplary of the values we cherish in Northwest Indiana.

David Chlebek is being honored with the 23rd Annual President's Award. David is a fine example of the tenets embodied by those who have dedicated their lives to enhancing the well being of workers throughout Northwest Indiana. He has mastered his trade and has consistently performed at the highest level throughout his hard work and self sacrifice.